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U.S. Indicts 16 as Plotters In Heroin-Ring Smuggling

Alleged Leader Is Named but Missing—French Group Accused of Shipping in a Ton of the Narcotic Every Day

By JAMES M. MARKHAM

United States Attorney Whitney North Seymour Jr. yesterday announced the indictment of a man said to be a major French heroin trafficker, along with 15 of his alleged colleagues who reportedly smuggled a ton of the drug a year into the United States.

At a news conference with John E. Ingersoll, director of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and Francois LeMouel, head of the French narcotics office, Mr. Seymour sketched the alleged machinations of the ring, which appeared to have used on occasion the now-classic triangular importation route from Europe to South America and up to the United States.

Seven of the defendants were arrested in raids Wednesday night—six in New York and one in Miami. Four are at large, three in the United States and one in Argentina; four others are in custody here and abroad in connection with other crimes, and the reputed leader of the group, Andre Gaetan Condemine, may have been "eliminated," in the phrase of Mr. LeMouel.

Major Suppliers

The international syndicate, according to the calculations of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, would have furnished between a sixth and a tenth of the annual estimated needs of American addicts.

In addition to being charged with conspiracy to import heroin, the defendants were accused of plotting to help one of their number, an Argentine named Alfredo Mazza, escape from a Florida prison where he was in custody on charges of importing 300 pounds of heroin.

Condemine, a 39-year-old French citizen, fled his own country more than a decade ago after committing a series of violent robberies, for which he was condemned to death in absentia, according to Mr. LeMouel.

A tall, dapper man who used the alias Mario Deniz, Condemine operated principally out of Buenos Aires and Brussels, although he kept a temporary home in Paris, according to the French official. Two months ago, Mr. LeMouel said, authorities discovered that Deniz and Condemine were the same person.

On Nov. 17 Condemine was indicted here along with Christian David, another Frenchman who headed a separate heroin-smuggling syndicate out of Brazil. At about that time Condemine disappeared in Brussels, Mr. LeMouel said, adding that "he may have been eliminated."

Mr. LeMouel, who heads an office with a formidable name —L'Office Central Pour la Suppression du Trafic des Stupefiante — charged that Condemine was "very much bigger" in the narcotics underworld than David.

Last week David pleaded guilty to heavy charges here to avoid extradition to France, where he, too, faces a death sentence. Mr. LeMouel expressed the hope that David would "one day" be returned to France for prosecution.

Both Mr. Ingersoll and Mrs. Seymour said yesterday's indictments were in part the fruit of close cooperation among American, European and South American law enforcement officials. Mr. Ingersoll noted that since the beginning of this year 27 individuals who were allegedly tied to the Condemine organization had been arrested in seven countries.

7 Seized in November

On Nov. 25 French authorities rounded up seven suspects linked to the ring, including Rachid Gharbi, described as its "controller," and Humberto Mariles Cortez, a retired brigadier general of the Mexican Army who died of a heart attack in a Paris jail three nights ago.

Mr. Ingersoll said the investigation had been greatly aided by the undercover work of Sgt. William Valentine of the New York City Police Department, who was assigned to the New York Joint Task Force.

Posing as a mob-connected wholesale buyer, the Spanish-speaking police officer traveled to Buenos Aires, where he met with Pedro Caballero Linares, a Spanish-born middleman who was jailed there two months ago. Sergeant Valentine also reportedly met with Gharbi, who is a French citizen, in New York.

In addition to Condemine, Gharbi and Calallero, the other defendants are the following:

Eduardo Arroyo, 32 years old, of 79 Allen Street, arrested and bail set at $125,000.
Alfredo Aviles, at large in the United States.
Julio Ferrer, 28, of Miami, arrested and bail set at $15,000.
Louis Frank Fragliossi, 36, of 605 Water Street, arrested and bail set at $50,000.
Rafael Angel Gonzales, 24, of 106 Elder Street, arrested and bail set at $125,000.
Alfredo Mazza, Argentine citizen, jailed in Florida on previous charges.
Carlos Mazza, brother of Alfredo, at large in Argentina.
Epifanio Rosa Perez, at large in the United States.
Benjamin Rodriguez, 42 years old, of 7 Cherry Lane, Great Neck, L.I., arrested and bail set at $100,000.
Carlos M. Sanchez, 37, of 910 Sheridan Ave., the Bronx, arrested and bail set at $50,000.
Moises Miguel Sanchez, Brazilian citizen, in custody in Brazil.
Ralph Torres, at large in the United States.
Frank J. Vispisiano, 33, of 264 East Broadway, arrested and bail set at $150,000.

All three of the law enforcement officials at the news conference stressed that the recent flurry of indictments of heroin traffickers, while significant, would not put an end to the racket—"as long as there is a market," as Mr. LeMouel put it.